

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Public Information Department, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340

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PRESS RELEASE

PROGRESSIVE VISION: DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND 1903-1930
June 10-July 27, 1986

An unusual educational exhibition at The Cleveland Museum of Art presents the great dreams and designs for Cleveland at the beginning of the 20th century, at a remarkable time in the city's history when it was the fastest growing city in the United States. Progressive Vision: Downtown Cleveland 1903-1930 chronicles a civic ambition shaped by a foresight rare in this country's urban history. The exhibition opens June 10 and closes July 27, 1986.

"The subject of this exhibition is the challenge before the city at its moment of greatest prosperity," Museum director Evan Turner writes in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue. He points out that in the 1980s Cleveland is again "deeply involved in major planning decisions" that will shape the city's appearance and its life in the future. The Museum's exhibition seeks to illuminate the planning goals and philosophies of earlier citizens, thereby encouraging thoughtful consideration of current goals and approaches to the city's future.

Cleveland met its first challenge, at the beginning of the century, with a grand scheme: a lakeside plaza of awesome dimensions surrounded by beautiful neoclassic public buildings. The Group Plan--the Mall and its buildings--was intended to be, and remains, more than 80 years after its creation, what one of its architects, Daniel Burnham, liked to call each of his city plans: "a noble diagram." It gave visible structure to the heart of downtown, served as Cleveland's anchor during some of its hardest times, and can now serve as inspiration for the city's burgeoning revival.

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Among the materials to be exhibited are architectural drawings, original linens, presentation renderings, site plans, and blueprints, and more than 130 photographs, the largest number of them modern photographs of familiar landmarks. A small and impressive group of decorative objects, ranging from a bronze mailbox from the Midland Building, which originally included the Engineers and Medical Arts Buildings, to a 32-foot long railroad bench from the depot in Terminal Tower, are included. Andrew Chakalis, head of the Extensions Division of the Museum's Education Department, and Holly Rarick, a master's degree student in the program in art history jointly sponsored by the Museum and Case Western Reserve University, have carried out extensive research and discovered materials long forgotten and moldering in cupboards and basements all over Cleveland.

The Extensions Division sends exhibitions throughout the city and its neighborhoods--in 1985 as many as 525--and has, in turn, for this exhibition drawn on many Cleveland civic and corporate resources. Lenders to the exhibition--beside the Cleveland Museum and its library--are Cleveland Public Library, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cuyahoga County Archives, Tower City Archives of Forest City Enterprises, The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland as well as Huntington Bank and AmeriTrust, Ress Company Realty, Cleveland State University, Cleveland Board of Education, and the City of Cleveland. The new photographs for the exhibition were made by Bruce Kiefer, Richard N. Campen, and David M. Thum. The exhibition is assisted by The Women's Council of The Cleveland Museum of Art; Forest City Enterprises, Cleveland; and the Ohio Arts Council. The Herman R. Marshall Memorial Fund aided publication of the catalogue.

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At the turn of the century, Cleveland was bursting at the seams. Industry and commerce were booming, and immigrants streamed in to fill the jobs being created in ever larger numbers. The city needed public buildings. The model that suited

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its needs and its high-flying civic pride was the ideal created at the 1893 World's Columbian exposition in Chicago: monumental neoclassic structures grouped around a central court of honor.

Mayor Tom L. Johnson, a progressive politician whom Lincoln Steffens called "the best mayor of the best governed city in the United States," appointed a Group Plan Commission in 1902. Its members were Daniel Burnham, who had been director of public works at the Columbian Exposition; John M. Carrere, designer of the 1901 Pan Am Exposition in Buffalo; and Arnold R. Brunner, who had been selected by the Federal Government to design the new post office in Cleveland. Created by these men and supported by the city's political and economic leadership, the Group Plan for Cleveland became the first outside Washington, D.C.--for which Pierre L'Enfant had designed a grand plan in 1796--to embark on a grand civic design. Burnham's oft-quoted motto, "Make No Small Plans," matched Cleveland's progressive vision.

The grand mall was to be 560 feet wide, stretching from Rockwell to Lakeside, and bordered by a Federal Building, Library, County Courthouse, and Cleveland City Hall. A massive train depot was to be placed between the Courthouse and City Hall. Three of these were completed by 1916. The Group Plan and its public buildings had an impact on private building, as Cleveland Trust (now AmeriTrust), Guardian Trust (now the old National City Bank), Union Trust (now Huntington), and the Federal Reserve Bank testify, and attracted to Cleveland architects eager for new challenges--most notably Frank Walker and Harry Weeks. Their firm became the preeminent local one in the 1920s, responsible for carrying out or supervising much of the later buildings of the Group Plan: Public Auditorium in 1922, Cleveland Public Library in 1925, Music Hall addition to the Public Auditorium in 1928, Board of Education in 1930, and Cleveland Municipal Stadium in 1931.

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The principal defection from the Group Plan was the Terminal Tower, the new location of the train station. It was the lifelong project of brothers Mantis J. and Oris P. Van Sweringen, and in 1919, the city voted to locate the depot on the Square; its grand opening took place in 1930.

Even in the face of economic decline, the Great Lakes Exposition, held on the Lakefront and the Mall in 1936, prompted, at last, the landscaping of the Mall. And then the "noble diagram" proved its worth. It held the city together through some of its leanest years, until now its value--both as history and as model for future planning--has again become apparent. The Group Plan inspired city planning in Cleveland and its most recent addition can be seen to be the new headquarters of the Standard Oil Company, providing a presence at the south end of the mall, as was envisioned more than 80 years ago.

Related programs at the Museum are listed elsewhere.

Admission, parking, and all programs are free.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.